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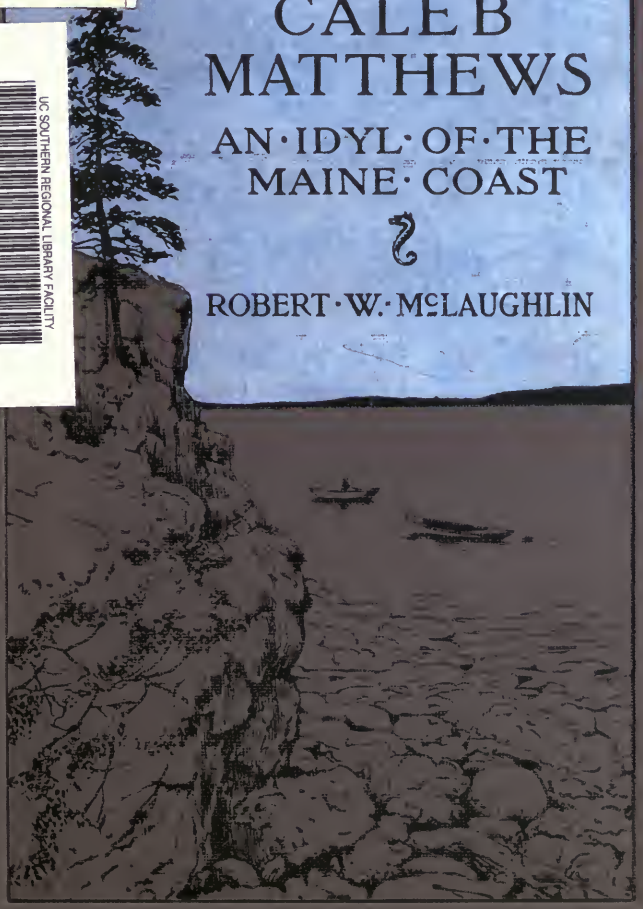
CALEB MATTHEWS

AN·IDYL·OF·THE MAINE·COAST

ROBERT·W.·McLAUGHLIN



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THE LOBSTERMAN

CALEB MATTHEWS

An Idyl of the Maine Coast

BY

ROBERT W. McLAUGHLIN

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I. THE SETTLEMENT

FF the coast of Maine, twenty miles from the railroad, is an arrow-shaped island six miles long and pointing out to sea. At the tip of this island is a fishing settlement of less than a hundred souls, increased during the summer by another hundred. It is a spot to grow enthusiastic over, for here nature has done some of her best work. The vast expanse of ocean, unbroken to the southward, save as in imagination distant lands are pictured below the horizon; a coast line, irregular and craggy, its contour changing with the rise and fall of the tides; islands well in the distance, which come forward or go back under the

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mystic illusion of the atmosphere; the heave of the deep—washing, pounding, or dashing against the rocks; wild flowers struggling from crevices in the ledges; patches of green bayberry bushes growing in thin soil, pine trees, sending their roots down to the water's edge; and over all the everlasting wash of air, in which is mingled the tang of the sea with the odor of the spruce.

Spilled over this tip of the island are some tokens of man's presence: an old fish house with its pile of decayed nets; a decrepit dock, beginning on the land with rocks and ending in the water with spindly poles; a rusty anchor or two; here and there a clump of lobster pots, some gray with age, others yellow with youth; a few fishermen's houses scattered about with the regularity of patches in a crazy quilt;

almost as many summer cottages set primly along the shore; a little schoolhouse one story high, with a bell above the ridge pole; a mass of building, which is a cross between a boarding house and hotel, with a big addition at the rear a story higher than the original part at the front, and suggesting a cat with its back up; and, finally, a story-and-a-half frame building, some of which is thinly painted white, with a door rigidly set in the center at the front, from which protrudes a platform.

Within this building, and on the left as you enter, is a counter with a pair of scales, a cheese under cover, and a show case with several familiar brands of tobacco in one end and in the other end half a dozen cardboard boxes containing penny candy. Behind the counter on the shelves is a rather restricted

assortment of groceries, a few knick-knacks, and fewer still household remedies, including the soothing syrup with its motherly name, and the gentle laxative for which the babies cry.

On the right of the door, and in the corner, is an inclosure, formed on two sides by the walls of the building, on the third by a partition with an opening, and in front by wood which reaches half way up, the other half being of glass. In the wood just below the glass is the familiar slit, as large again as a good-sized human mouth, into which the citizens of the settlement feed their letters. Above this slit is a miniature window, with a wooden slide, usually down, but pushed up for a time when the agent of Uncle Sam arrives with the mail bag. Through this window, immediately following the drop of the slide, the

representative of the government peers for about fifteen minutes each day in the summer, and for the same length of time once a week during the remainder of the year.

At the back of this inclosure, and occupying a little more space, are a few barrels, a couple of kegs, and half a dozen cracker boxes. It will be readily understood that this space is not reserved primarily for these boxes, kegs, and barrels; rather, these are placed in this space, that on them the fishermen may find support while fault is found with the weather, the shortage of lobsters explained, and other important questions settled.

This section of the building is at its best in the evening, it being a great moment when, at the close of the day, the lamp over the cheese box on the counter is lighted, and the talk begins.

Then much is said that is so, and a little that isn't—especially about the weather.

Another thing to be noticed, and by no means of least importance, is the sign on the outside of the building. It is homemade rather than hand-painted, and hangs on a slight bias, although the evident intention was to hang it directly over the door. This sign reminds one of Ben Franklin's famous sign of three words, which played such an important part in the debate leading up to the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. For this piece of board has three words on it—the two words "post office" on the upper line, and the word giving the name of the place on the line below.

The absence of the word "store" from this sign has caused much com-

ment. As the building contains sugar, crackers, and household remedies, it is strange that this word does not appear. Some have found in the absence of the word an indication of an unworldly spirit. They reason in this way: When the words for the sign were selected it was decided to call attention only to that portion of the building in which things are sold without profit—such as postage stamps and postal cards. Nothing should appear on this piece of board which would remotely suggest worldly gain.

It is possible that this interpretation is correct, although it requires an ample supply of genial optimism to accept it. Of course it is true that the typical fisherman of the Maine coast possesses an unworldly spirit—especially in the preliminary stages leading

up to a bargain. He never thinks of a transaction for mere gain. If he sells anything, from a box of matches to a little dirt with much rock—called a shore lot—it is simply as an accommodation. All this may be granted.

However, if the truth must be told, the absence of this word probably indicates a spirit of pride. At the time appointed for the painting of the sign, the fishermen, with their wives and children, gathered before the piece of board to watch the local artist with pot of paint and brush do his work. Realizing the importance of the occasion and that history was in the making, an impromptu town meeting was held on the spot, and by acclamation it was voted that nothing so commonplace as the word "store" should appear. The building within was a department of the government; a link

in the chain of imperial democracy; it was, if you please, a *post office.*

There is evidence of the existence of this pride, apart from that found in the absence of the word "store" from the sign. This evidence is presented when, about six o'clock in the evening, the wagon with the mail bag rattles up the North Road and comes into view. The appearance of this wagon acts upon the settlement as a sudden shift in the wind upon the atmosphere. Then the fishermen stroll up from the shore, the women toss aside their aprons and come over, the children swarm in from play, the few stragglers in the rear of the store move forward, and even the people in the cottages rise to the occasion and have the evening meal early, that they may be on hand. Yes, pride has taken deep root in this fishing settlement.

Still another thing to be noticed is the name of the place as it appears on this sign. The words "Post Office" are on the upper line and in letters so large that a wayfaring man though out on the water can read them. But the name of the place is on the lower line, and in letters so small that a powerful marine glass is needed to read the word fifty feet away. It seems to be sneaked into the sign and crowded up close to the two larger words.

This indicates but one thing, namely, the fishermen on this tip of the island are a little ashamed of the name given to their settlement. Of course, they will not admit this. They evade the issue by never pronouncing the name. When off from home a few miles they are always from the "Cape." Nevertheless, the sign gives them away.

However, the fishermen in this

settlement should not be blamed too severely for this lack of loyalty to the name. All things considered, they are entitled to some sympathy. To live amid such glorious surroundings with nature at her best; to have the lovely spot discovered by the government and made a post office; then when the sign is lettered to find it necessary to paint on it the flat, dull drab name "Crewaggen"! No wonder they sneaked the name into the sign in small letters. Any man with sensitive nerves would do the same.

The fact is, the name doesn't jibe with anything. It is an absolute antithesis to all that is hereabouts. The houses of the fishermen, with flowers in front and wood piles and chicken coops in the rear, have a charm. The old fish house, the dilapidated dock, and lobster pots frame well as a

picture. The roads and paths over the rocks, though crooked as the lines in an economist's chart, have a fascination. The store with the counter, cracker boxes, and glass front is a pleasant place in which to while away an hour. Even some of the summer cottages, if one is in a generous mood, seem attractive. But the name of this place on the sign! The man does not exist who can extract from it a single glint of beauty.

If the name is flat and dull drab as read on the piece of board, it is positively irritating when audibly pronounced. Then it scratches the mind as the briars on the bush scratch the hand. For the first "e" in the word is long, and special emphasis is placed upon the two "g's." On a day in summer, with a crisp breeze from the southwest blowing through the pines

and rustling the bayberry leaves, or with a wind from out to sea playing a marine anthem on the rocks, suddenly to be compelled to say to yourself that you are at Cre-wag-gen! This is certainly irritating.

Yet, all things considered, the name should be defended. When correctly understood it is a tribute to the common sense of the grandfathers of these fishermen. A little reason mixed with more imagination will furnish an argument something like this: In physics there is a law that every action is followed by an opposite and equal reaction. These early settlers unconsciously carried this law over into the realm of nomenclature. Coming upon this spot with its wild beauty, the action was such as to well-nigh lift them outside of themselves. Under the influence of this action they

struggled to express their feelings by giving a name to the place. Realizing their utter helplessness to find a word for their feelings, a reaction followed, and in despair they said—"Crewaggen!"

II. THE FISHERMAN

The sign on the outside having attracted our attention, and its words read with some care, let us again enter the building and acquaint ourselves with the man behind the sign as he is responsible for these pages.

In appearance he suggests the year sixty, although it is dangerous to guess the age of one bred by the sea. Should he stand erect, the length of two yard sticks would be needed; but this he will never do, for he has spent too many hours standing with face to the bow while rowing his dory to ever again straighten to his full height. In frame he is loose jointed, angular, and the weights for a hundred and seventy pounds are needed. His hands are big, and being connected with arms

that hang like pieces of well-worn rope, they are apt to deceive, until one of them closes with a friendly grip. The head is well formed, with hair abundant and almost white, that comes down to a forehead plenty wide and none too high. His eyes would be called small, nearly round, and bluish gray; they twinkle easily, but usually are quiet and faintly pathetic. Of the nose little should be said other than that it is bulbous, and in certain kinds of weather takes on color, although its owner hates whisky as he does poison. The mouth is fairly large, flanked by the lines of a strong but not pronounced jaw, and with firm lips that meet accurately. From between these lips issues a voice gentle, and just short of womanish, with an accent soft and delicious as any heard among men. In speech he is reserved, but if the

right spot in his mental organism is touched, he will talk easily, always quaintly, sometimes humorously, and usually wisely. His name is Caleb Matthews—not an unpleasant name, known with no undue familiarity in these pages as Caleb, but whose full title is Captain Caleb Matthews, lobster fisherman, and incidentally postmaster and storekeeper of Crewaggen.

Although a lobster fisherman, and incidentally one or two other things, Caleb, in the best sense of the word, is a man of the world, for he has traveled far beyond the lobster buoys that bob up and down off shore. He has sailed to China twice, and bucked the crowd on the water front at Hongkong; once he rounded Cape Horn and slipped through the Golden Gate, with the foothills of the Sierras on the sky line and dead ahead; several

times he has fished on the Grand Banks when the heave of the sea made the boat stand on end. But the trip he likes to talk about, when he will talk at all, is the one that sent him into New York harbor, and gave him a chance to stroll up Fulton Street while his boat unloaded its cargo of fish at the wharf. Simply mention the famous thoroughfare, with Brooklyn Bridge thrown in, and something will start in Caleb's mental organism.

All this, however, is in the distant past. Thirty years ago he returned to Crewaggen, settled down, married his wife, and started a home. Then he began tacking laths on his lobster pots, baiting them, rowing off shore to haul and lower, and with the proceeds of his labor to provide frugally for his wife, and later for his six children. Having done such things for all these

years, he will continue to do them until his legs become too unsteady to support him in his boat and his arms too weak to haul the lobster pots in fifty or more feet of water.

In addition to being well traveled, Caleb is something of a historian. While voyaging to distant lands is with him only a memory, yet as a historian he frequently journeys into the past, for he has a real instinct for history. Although he is the only fisherman in the settlement who by any stretch of imagination could be called a historian, yet he comes by this instinct naturally. For off to the southwest a few miles is Popham Beach, where the first boat in America was launched in 1607. Within easy sailing distance to the northeast is Pemaquid, which disputes with Jamestown the claim of being the first permanent

white settlement in the New World. He is proud of these facts and responds to them as a traveler from inland responds to the ozone of the ocean. If sufficiently stirred, he will, with vividness and a language all his own, make these events of the distant past live again. Could his words be printed, they would make many pages of some learned historians seem dull enough. History for him is not science, but primarily literature, even though the form of his literature is quaint and decidedly colloquial.

However, Caleb is seen at his best as a historian, when on rare occasions, perhaps once during the summer, he leaves you standing on the shore, while he goes to the house, only to return with a little varnished box. In this box are two documents: one a facsimile copy of the Declaration of

Independence, which his father before him secured with a subscription to a magazine; the other, a faded newspaper containing an account of a sea fight off the shore of Crewaggen in the War of 1812.

If Caleb shares the pride of the settlement each day when the mail bag arrives, he indulges in a pride all his own when he reveals the contents of this box. In fact, it is worth a trip to this tip of the island to see this native historian on such an occasion. That subtle something called general attitude reveals this pride: the movement of the big hand as with tiny key the box is unlocked; the adjustment of the steel-rimmed spectacles preparatory to the unfolding of the documents; and the expression of awe mingled with affection as he looks upon them and then hands them to his friend.

It is a critical moment for the privileged one to whom are handed these documents. Caleb stands off and with weather eye peeled, watches the countenance to decide whether you are capable of appreciating his treasures. If you fail to rise to the occasion, henceforth you will be merely an acquaintance treated with proper respect, but by no amount of good works in other directions can you enter the inner circle of his friendship. The damage done is simply irreparable.

In attempting to understand Caleb, it is necessary to admit that he has his limitations. For one thing, he has a prejudice or two. This may seem strange in a man with such a marked instinct for history. The one limitation that the true historian is supposed not to have is prejudice. But Caleb in some respects is a law unto him-

self, for he certainly has the historical instinct, and with equal certainty it must be affirmed he has prejudice.

A dozen years ago, when a few congenial spirits from the outside world discovered Crewaggen, the building with the sign over the door was not standing. Then the post office was in a room at the end of Caleb's house. Being some miles from the nearest store, these newcomers prevailed upon him to lay in a few dry groceries. Later they persuaded him to send away for a bunch of bananas. This he did against his better judgment, as it seemed a waste of time to deal in anything so unnecessary to human existence. In fact, his conscience disturbed him, for he saw in this demand unmistakable evidence of a growing spirit of worldliness.

When the bananas arrived the craving for luxury was so strong that in a few minutes they were sold. A belated cottager appeared on the scene and inquired for some. Caleb, with ominous firmness, announced that he had none. The cottager made bold to suggest that he send for another bunch. The reply was decidedly in the negative. Then the would-be purchaser made the mistake of attempting to argue the question. This proved too much for the storekeeper, who was in no mood for argument. He had eased his conscience somewhat by disposing of the bananas, yet he was a trifle disappointed that he had disposed of them. This may seem contradictory, but human nature is not altogether consistent, even in fishermen. So, laying aside the newspaper which he had pretended to read—not considering

the conversation of sufficient importance to require his undivided attention—he delivered himself as follows:

"You folks from the city provoke me. 'Gainst my own feelin's I got the bananas. Before I'd a chance to hang 'em up you bought 'em. Now *you* come 'round wantin' me to send for more. I won't do it. For I hain't goin' to sell nuthin' I can't keep."

The late arrival had no answer for this argument. There was simply nothing more to say. He only wondered whether Caleb would make a good storekeeper. This was some years ago. Later the store was moved into the frame building and the sign painted. Now bananas may occasionally be seen in the store; but Caleb will not touch them. His son, a fine young fellow, pulls them from the

stem, in addition to weighing the pounds of sugar, cutting the slices of cheese, and drawing the gallons of kerosene oil. It is only at odd moments that the father wanders behind the counter.

Another fact about Caleb, which must be considered a limitation, is the existence of a strain of sentiment, which, usually well hidden, has been known to come to the surface and retard the dispatch of his official business. There is reason to believe that he is unconscious of this. For while, in the school of experience, he has learned of his limitations behind the counter, yet he refuses to admit any limitations in the performance of his duties as postmaster. He knows that he was appointed during the administration of President Harrison, and he proposes to be loyal to his

trust. All the lobster pots off the Maine coast would not keep him away when the mail bag arrives.

Yet it was in the performance of his duty as postmaster that sentiment once got the better of him. The situation was this: A young lady by name Kate Matthews, though not related, was visiting Crewaggen. On a Monday evening she went to the post office expecting an important letter which she had reason to believe had been mailed in New York on the preceding Saturday morning. With Sunday intervening the letter should have arrived, but, to her disappointment, it was not in her mail. She accepted what seemed the inevitable. The next afternoon Caleb appeared at the cottage and handed her the letter. She was much surprised and inquired where it came from.

"Uncle Sam brought it," was the reply.

"But there has been no mail since last night, has there, Captain?"

"Nope," said Caleb.

"Well, I don't understand this, for I inquired for my mail last night."

The postmaster was cornered and he knew it, so he said, a little nervously: "I'll tell you. I'd a sister named Kate Matthews, the same as yours. She went to Californy 'bout twenty years ago. Hain't seen or heard nuthin' from her since. Last night when fingerin' the letters an' pokin' them in the boxes, I came on this one, an' the sight o' the name made me feel kind o' queer. I jest couldn't help it, so I tucked it one side. After the folks was gone I took it out an' looked at it. Then I placed it on the window sill, an' every now

an' then this mornin' I'd go over an' look at it. But 'while ago, it come over me that you might want it, so here it be."

Those who heard this conversation thought none the less of Caleb—perhaps a little more. However, they realized that his largest success in life might not come in the postal service. The fact is, he is not seen under the most favorable circumstances within this building. This does not mean that one need be ashamed of him here. There is a native dignity that enables him to carry himself well anywhere. But there is too much of him, in more senses than one, to appear to the best advantage while handing out letters through a little opening in a post office partition, or while standing behind a counter with pencil poised on a cheese box. He needs the shore

with rocks, an ample sky line, a large stretch of water, and plenty of air.

Still another limitation in the life of Caleb is a deep sorrow, accompanied by a sense of mystery and balanced by a strong faith. Unlike the limitations mentioned, through this one he has come into a larger life, thus making real for himself the strange paradox that freedom is conditioned upon restriction.

The few words spoken by this noble man about his sorrow will linger long in the memory of his friend. They were uttered down by the old fish house as the two sat there watching the night come on. It was Sunday, and Caleb had on his black suit and starched shirt, for the sense of fitness was strong with him, and he yielded to this burden for one day in seven. In the little harbor the fishing boats

OFF BAKERS ISLAND

were resting at their moorings, in preparation for another week of work. A new moon was gently splashing a trail on the water; the flash of the light on Battegat was growing clearer as the darkness increased; the sea was restless, but not turbulent, as it rolled in on a flood tide and washed over the rocks off Bakers Island; it was an hour when the spirit as it experienced a "sense of something far more deeply interfused" was encouraged to feel itself more than the body.

After a brief lull in the conversation Caleb, who was twisting a few blades of grass in his fingers, swung his eyes around like a searchlight feeling out the channel, and, fastening them upon his friend, quietly asked whether he really believed in Providence. The question marked a change in the conversation, for nothing had been said

on the subject. But the friend understood what was in his mind. Five years before his loyal wife had been mentally afflicted, and growing worse, only darkness of the mind seemed ahead.

Caleb had never complained of this, and through it all had played the part of a brave and tender man. He had refused to commit this companion of the years to an asylum. On one occasion, and only one, he had said to his friend in his own quiet but determined way: "To put my wife in one o' 'em 'sylums would be throwin' her overboard; I can't do it; she's bin good to me an' the children. I'm goin' to stand by an' weather the storm with her."

The friend knew that the mystery of this affliction was in his mind, as he asked the question, and so in reply he

expressed a little doubt about the workings of Providence. It was then that Caleb made him feel ashamed, as he swung his eyes out to sea again, and said half to himself: "It's a slow, wet wind that's bin blowin' 'gainst my life. But it can't always stay in this quarter. Some time it'll shift an' when it does the fog will move out to sea an' it'll be clear. Till then I'll lay to an' wait it out."

Life for this true-hearted fisherman had taken on meaning as the result of his sorrow. His friend then understood why a tender pathos was faintly reflected in his eyes—for it was in his soul.

III. THE PICTURES

Curiously, through the dozen years, which began with mere acquaintance, quickly passed into friendship, and finally deepened into affection, the friend had never entered the house of Caleb. Often on a stormy day he had sat on a soap box in the store and visited; frequently he had whittled a piece of wood down by the rocks while the other mended his lobster pots; and on a few occasions they had walked along the North Road or sat by the shore on Sunday afternoons; but never had they talked things over in the house until one day last summer.

Then word came that Caleb, while climbing up the ladder on to the dock, had slipped and badly strained his

leg, and as a result was laid up at home. Hearing of this, the friend thought of it as an opportunity for a friendly visit. So, going over to the house, he found him sitting in a rocking chair by the window, his lame leg stretched out and across a chair in front of him. The room was a kitchen, dining, and living room combined. It was spotlessly clean, as would be expected if this man made it his place of abode. The central ornament was a cookstove, with its shining blackness set off by nickel trimmings. Behind the stove was a plain, high, old-fashioned mantel with a single shelf—the whole painted gray—and on the shelf a wooden clock which ticked out the minutes. Built into one of the walls of the room was a cupboard with shelves neatly covered with white paper. The table was set for the

next meal, with a netting thrown over to keep out the flies.

It is not always easy to converse with Caleb, and this apparently was one of his reticent days. After the proper expression of sympathy had been made for his ailment there came a pause, during which his friend sat looking around the room for a suggestion. Presently his eye fell upon three little pictures in frames about ten by twelve inches, and hanging on the wall diagonally opposite.

Owing to the shadow in the room he could not make out the pictures from where he sat. Soon the afternoon sun worked around and flooded the wall with light. Then, to his surprise, he saw that the three pictures were inexpensive photographs of the famous paintings of Millet, "The Sowers," "The Gleaners," and "The

Angelus." He had known Caleb long enough to expect anything, but he had not expected to find such pictures on the wall of his room.

After the surprise had passed, and while carrying on a desultory conversation, he reached the conclusion that a summer visitor, who had been the recipient of his kindness, had, upon returning to the city, sent him these photographs as a token of appreciation. Not knowing what else to do with them, they had been hung upon the wall.

Satisfied in his own mind that the correct explanation had been found for the pictures being there, the friend expressed his interest in them. At once the face of Caleb brightened, indicating that another spot in his mental organism had been touched; that here was an interest that rivaled

Fulton Street in New York, and the two documents in the varnished box. The pictures had become part of himself, as good pictures in a home should.

This encouraged the friend to ask a question or two, so he said: "If you don't mind the question, I am wondering where these pictures came from?"

"Portland," was the laconic reply.

This answer was unexpected. Had he replied, "New York" or "Boston," the theory of the summer visitor would have been fairly established, as there were several in the little vacation colony from these cities, but none from Portland. The friend hesitated for a moment, as he always respected any reserve on the part of Caleb. Presently the fisherman, with that fine instinct for courtesy so characteristic of him, knowing that something more should

be said, continued: "Railroad run an excursion from Bath to Portland last fall, an' 's hadn't bin there in years, went over. Landin' at station, an' havin' no course laid, was driftin' 'long an' come over 'gainst store window with these picters."

This settled the summer visitor theory, so the friend while making the necessary readjustment in his mind remarked: "Well, you have copies of three of the great paintings of the world. I have two of them in my house in New York, and wish I had the third one."

That Caleb should be interested in pictures to the extent of buying them was something of a surprise. During the years of acquaintance he had never expressed any appreciation of the beautiful in nature, other than to say occasionally that, "it was a big sort

o' day," or "the night was ruther strange." Yet here he was confessing that he had spent his hard-earned money for three photographs of famous paintings.

More than this, by his own statement, he had paused in front of a store window, and fastened his attention upon pictures of scenes entirely removed from his own experience. He was a lobster fisherman, yet the proud possessor of farm scenes. How to account for this was not clear, so the friend put out a feeler by saying: "I suppose, Caleb, these were the only pictures in the window. Probably, if there had been pictures of the ocean —what they call marine views—you would have bought them instead of these."

"Nope," was the instant reply; "I bought 'em 'cause I wanted 'em."

As he said this there was in his voice a slight intimation that he wished his friend to understand that he knew what he was doing, even though away from home. In other words, that at the moment when he bought these pictures in Portland he was clothed in his right mind and had intelligently exercised his judgment.

His friend accepted this gentle rebuke and remarked: "Caleb, you are an odd combination. For a dozen years now you have kept me guessing. I never know what you will do next. Here you are a fisherman who makes a living with his lobster pots, going over to Portland and buying pictures of farm scenes."

This was said half jokingly, but the other caught not only the spirit of the words, but the humor of the situation, and, chuckling softly to himself, replied,

"Dunno' 'bout that; s'pose 'tis kind o' queer."

This disposition to relent, even though slightly, gave the friend his opportunity, and so he said: "Really now, Caleb, wouldn't you rather have pictures of the sea? I admit these are very fine, and I am glad that you have them, but, after all, you are a fisherman. Just think of a picture of one of those handsome steam yachts that pass to and from Bar Harbor. I know you pretend not to care for them, yet I think that down in your heart you are proud of the fact that they pass near this shore in the summer. Just imagine one of those beautiful things, dressed in white; seemingly bedecked in jewels, as the shining metal trimmings flash back the sunlight; and bowing itself forward through the waves with the grace of a society

queen. Now, wouldn't you like such a picture?"

"Nope," he replied, "got the picters I want. Don't mind 'em fashion boats that pass 'long there. They're reel putty!" This was quite an admission for him to make, as he had a prejudice against handsome steam yachts, not unlike that against bananas. Then he added, "I'd ruther see one o' 'em little boats that chunks 'long near shore."

As he said this a little, broad-beamed, made-over sail boat, with a gasoline engine, and loaded with young people from a boarding house up the island, could be seen from the window. On pleasant days a number of these boats appear, it being a favorite trip to come down one shore and return by the other shore, thus making a circuit of the island. They look like small trans-

ports about to land an army. Now and then one of them does land its invading force, which storms the store, plays havoc with the penny candy in the show case, and carries away not a little of the crackers and cheese. These boats in moving through the water lack the grace of the big white yachts, but coming near shore, if the wind is right, laughter may be heard. and that is worth more in the summer time than graceful lines.

The friend was inclined to agree with Caleb in his preference for these smaller boats. He could not share his prejudice against the larger boats, yet often while watching them in the distance as they moved swiftly through the water, with the smaller boats panting along near shore, he had the feeling that perhaps those aboard the big boats went farther and lived less, and

those on the small boats traveled less and lived more. So he said to the fisherman: "I will change from the big, white craft to one of these small, chunking motor boats, with the mast taken out. For if you had a picture of one of them hanging there, in the winter time you could imagine you heard the young people laughing, and that would do you good.

"Then, Caleb, think of a picture of this shore. Let's see—a picture of the rocks off Sunrise Point. I should like it with the tide low, but having turned; the sea uneasy under the lash of the wind, the surf tossing its spray into the air, and over all the clear, sparkling light of the early morning, with the sun not far above the rim. Wouldn't that make a splendid picture?"

"'Bout 'em rocks at Sunrise Point," he replied; "there ain't none finer on

Maine shore. An' I know 'em well's any o' these painters that come down here with umbrellas and stools an' sit 'round all day paintin' 'em. I've had some pots out there for mos' thirty years, an' had to row off Sunrise Point good many times. I don't mind 'em painters paintin' 'em. But what's use o' me buyin' picters o' what I've got? Ain't they there every mornin' when I go out?"

The friend had to admit the force of this reasoning. However, he had one more suggestion in reserve, for he remembered how on one occasion Caleb had described the ship in which he had rounded Cape Horn. So he said: "Well, it may be true about Sunrise Point, but it is not true about that fine clipper ship you sailed down the Atlantic and up the Pacific in. There is nothing like her that passes off this

shore now. Just think of a picture hanging there of a square-rigged ship, every inch of canvas set, and leaning a little in a stiff breeze. I should think you would rather have such a picture than one of a farmer sowing seed."

He couldn't resist this, and, his face brightening, he replied: "Cal'ate a picture of the Samuel Langford would look ruther nice hangin' there. But there wa'n't one like her in the store."

Then the mystical process by which the mind projects itself beyond the body and goes wandering in distant regions revealed itself in his countenance. For a moment he was young again and sailing in waters far away.

The friend overlooked the mixing of genders, for with a sailor, every ship, whatever its name, is feminine. So, calling the fisherman back from

distant waters to Portland near by, he said: "That seems strange, for I have seen pictures of square-rigged ships in store windows. Certainly, in Portland, which is an important shipping port, there must be many such pictures. I suppose, of course, you asked the man in the store if he had such a picture." Caleb hesitated and seemed a trifle embarrassed, for it dawned upon him that perhaps he had slighted the ship that carried him through so many kinds of weather, and along the coasts of two continents in the long ago. Then he answered in a tone of voice that suggested that he was disposed to stand his ground, although conscious of the fact that he was being crowded a little: "Nope, I didn't ask the man nuthin'. I saw 'em picters hangin' there an' told the man I wanted 'em."

What he meant by this, taken in connection with his statement that there was no picture of a square-rigged ship in the store, was, that being interested in these pictures of Millet, he did not see others, and, therefore, failed to see a picture of a ship.

The conversation thus far had brought out two facts: one that Caleb bought these pictures—the appreciative summer visitor being a myth; the other, that he bought these pictures because these were the particular pictures he wanted—mention of Sunrise Point, a ship, and yacht having awakened no sense of disappointment.

With these facts in mind the friend ventured a little further, and remarked: "A man doesn't have to know all about a thing to admire it. What I don't know about lobster-fishing would fill

a good-sized book, yet I would like a picture of you, Caleb, in your dory, with three or four pots in the bow, and you rowing out to one of your buoys. And I suppose you felt the same way about these farm pictures."

"Guess you're right," he replied. "I don't pertend to know much 'bout farmin'—'less you count keepin' a few chickens."

"Then I suppose, Caleb, a man likes a change. I know that, having spent most of the year in the city, it seems good to come down here for a change. Probably, when you were in Portland and saw these pictures you felt the same way. You have lived by the sea most of your life, and pictures of land seemed good."

"There's suthin' in what you say. 'Tis sort o' nateral to want a change. Born here; paddled 'round these

rocks when a boy; went to sea; come back, an' s'pose I'll die here."

"I imagine, Caleb, if, when you reached the store window in Portland, you had seen a picture of Mount Washington, or Niagara Falls, you would have liked it just as much as these pictures. It was the thought of something other than you are accustomed to that interested you."

Ideal conversation consists in the search for agreements. Judged by this standard the conversation was now moving with delightful smoothness. The friend was doing his best to correct the earlier impression—that possibly he did not appreciate the fisherman's judgment in selecting these pictures. And with the instinct of the gentleman that he was, the fisherman was generously responding. But this last remark, though made

with the best of intention, caused a slight jar, and forced the fisherman to again defend his purchase of these pictures; so he replied with adequate firmness: "Nope, wa'n't thinkin' 'bout scenery. It's the men and women folk I like in 'em picters." "Oh, that's it," replied the friend. "Some years ago, Caleb, I saw these paintings—that is, the originals, as they are called—which the artist himself painted. As I remember them, while I was impressed by the men and women just as you are, yet I was attracted by the general landscape view in each. Evidently they have impressed you differently. I am interested to know what there is about these men and women that appeals to you." "Mebbe you can say what you think," he answered. "I ruther believe you can, for you know how to talk."

The bearing of this remark upon the question was not apparent. It seemed like a digression. Further, it was subject to more than one interpretation, though the earnestness with which it was spoken indicated that it was meant in a complimentary sense.

But the friend met the remark fairly, and replied: "Not by any means, Caleb. I often fail in expressing my thoughts, and sometimes wish I had remained silent."

Then the meaning of the remark became evident as the fisherman continued: "Dunno 'bout that; but when I saw 'em picters the men and women said what I'd bin thinkin' 'long time and wa'n't able to say. They sort o' spoke out in meetin'."

These last words furnished the clue for which the friend had been searching. Now he knew why Caleb bought

these pictures and hung them on the wall of the kitchen. They expressed for him some of the inner convictions of his own life—"they sort o' spoke out in meetin'." On the surface these words seemed contradictory. The one speaking them had admitted that he knew nothing about farming, yet pictures of farming, or, to be more exact, farmers at work, revealed his thought. Doubtless, he felt this seeming contradiction, or perhaps he detected the sense of contradiction in the face of his friend; at any rate, he continued: "Farmin' an' fishin' 'bout the same. I make fast to natur' same as Pickford up the North Road. His natur' 's dry, mine's wet. I figger like this: He sticks a plow in; I a boat. He drops seed down same 's man in picter; I let go lobster pots. He fusses 'round keepin' weeds out;

I fuss 'round keepin' my pots baited. He gets crop o' corn; I get crop o' lobsters. There ain't no real dif'ence."

This bit of fresh reasoning by comparison gave the real reason for the existence of these pictures on the wall of the room. He had bought them because he understood them. The truths conveyed by the pictures he knew about in his own experience; the forms of expression of the truths were those he was unaccustomed to. Here in simple form, within the walls of a fisherman's room, was a perfect illustration of Goethe's dictum: "Mankind is ever changing; man is ever the same." The fisherman was one with the farmer.

Further, from what had been said it was evident that this lobster fisherman was an art critic in the best sense of the word. Caleb would have looked

surprised had anyone called him an art critic. It is probable that he would have looked confused and asked what the words meant. He was a stranger to art galleries; the names "Dresden," "Louvre," and "Madrid" were unknown to him; originals of the masters he had never seen; such terms as perspective, technique, and shading—to say nothing of the geometric lines of the Cubists—had for him no meaning. Yet he had three fifty-cent photographs of great paintings hung upon the walls of his room. And what is of prime importance, he had these photographs because they said something to him, or, better still, something for him.

The essence of true criticism is to receive an impression of the thing criticized and then honestly and intelligently state the substance of the im-

pression. This fisherman had certainly received an impression from these photographs, and he had said enough to indicate that the impressions had taken intelligent shape in his mind. Ruskin could do no more.

The situation at last having become clear to the friend, he decided to make the most of it, and so walked over to the pictures. Caleb, who was sitting in an old-fashioned rocker by the window, with a twitch of the muscles of his face, worked his lame leg down from a kitchen chair and also came over. With the remark about these pictures that they "sort o' spoke out in meetin'" still in mind, the other looked at the picture of "The Sowers."

In the judgment of many, this is Millet's finest piece of work, although it is not as well known as some of the others. The reddish-brown soil

reaches well up on the canvas, and almost crowds out the sky. Against the background of the soil is the body of a peasant, the head and shoulders standing out more clearly against the light in the sky. It is one of the few paintings of this great artist that are not dependent for their effect upon the coloring, for the meaning of the picture is in the lines of the body of the peasant. The artist has done that most difficult thing, namely, paint the double action of the body—one arm thrown backward and one leg thrown forward. The picture as few in art reveals the strength, intensity, and freedom of work.

At this picture the friend pointed and with the thought of drawing the other out, remarked: "That farmer has a big job on his hands to sow that field with seed. I wonder if it wouldn't

THE SOUTH SHORE

be better for him if he had less work to do?"

"Mebbe," replied Caleb, "work ain't easy. 'Tain't no use sayin' 'tis. Some folks talk that way—but they've got fog in their brains. Jest give 'em 'bout twenty-five lobster pots to bait an' haul every day. Let 'em do this for a livin' an' I cal'ate there won't be much o' that kind o' talk."

"But he doesn't look very tired. There's a fine swing to his body, and I shouldn't wonder if he could keep up for some time," said the friend.

"Dunno' 'bout that," was the answer. "Can't tell by that picter what the time o' day. Ruther think it's putty soon after breakfast. Perhaps I'm ruther worthless, but I get putty tired o' work. I come ashore so gone there's 'bout much life lef' in me 's 'n cod 'n hour out o' water. Ruther glad

for a sou'east fog or a spell blowy weather. Seems kind o' comf'table to hang round."

Then a puzzled look came into his face, as he realized that what he said seemed to contradict the thought expressed in the picture. After a moment's pause, during which the friend pointed out the technical skill of the artist in painting the double action of the body, he continued: "Work ain't easy, an' 'tain't easy to hev' no work. It's all right to be shet in day or mebbe two, but let fo'-five foggy or blowy days come, an' it's draggin' kind o' livin'. 'Bout the third day the horn on the Rubholds gets exactin' an' a man begins to feel 's mean 's a dog fish. Work ain't easy, but I'd ruther work pullin' pots than hev no pots to pull."

"Well, Caleb," said the other, "it

seems to me your idea of work is like the farmer in the picture, who appears to be going in opposite directions at the same time. Don't you see that with the arm he is swinging back and with the foot he is moving forward? So with your idea of work. You say work is hard, and then you say no work is harder work."

The fisherman was disturbed by this comment, for he thought himself guilty of a contradiction. In fact, he was simply stating a familiar paradox, but stating it in his own quaint way. He did not know that the difference between a contradiction and a paradox is that a contradiction consists of two opposite statements that will not blend into a third, whereas, a paradox is a meeting of two statements, which, coming from opposite directions, blend into a third statement of fact. One

fact that he got hold of was work. The other and opposite fact was the absence of work. By bringing them together he had found the paradox; that work, which is hard, is easier than absence of work, which is easy.

"As I figger it," he continued, "there's suthin' in us shows we're made for work. That's what the painter 's showin' there. An' when he wants to show this he don't paint a man livin' by his wits, or sittin' at a desk, or crawlin' into an iron cage at a bank, as I saw over 'n Portland. I ain't got nuthin' 'gainst such people. But when you want to make a picter of work, you want a man up 'gainst natur'."

These words were not spoken with a personal application, although the friend was neither a fisherman nor a farmer. He knew, however, that

inasmuch as he was supposed to use his brains more than his muscles, in the judgment of Caleb he could not possibly be a real workman. But he held his peace, and the fisherman continued: "The painter there wants to show that the Almighty made us for work, an' so he put us in a workin' world. Same off shore. When I get out there, and bob up an' down pullin' my pots, an' hev time to think 'bout it, I feel I'm up 'gainst the Almighty's workin' world. An' that's why I wanted that picter."

This seemed a reasonably clear philosophy of work. While more colloquial, somewhat briefer, and perhaps less grammatical than the treatises on the subject in books, yet Caleb had the gist of the matter.

The two then moved along a little and looked at the picture entitled

"The Gleaners." This portrays a harvest scene. In the distance are the huge stacks of grain, a loaded cart, and the overseer or owner on horseback. In the foreground, and occupying most of the canvas, are three women bending over and in the stubble gathering the remaining fragments of grain.

The friend, looking upon the scene thus portrayed, remarked, "I suppose the artist painted these three women gathering the stray bits of grain to show that nothing should ever be wasted."

This remark evidently troubled Caleb, for a tone of surprise mingled with disappointment came into his voice. His friend was a minister, and he always addressed him as "Elder." So, turning from the picture and looking at him, he said: "Elder, you don't

understand that picter. I rec'lect sermon you preached in the schoolhouse Sunday mornin' 'bout year ago. It was from the Bible words, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' I'd thought 'bout 'em words myself, an' when you spoke 'em for your text, I was right glad at bein' there. What you said most the way was real good, but, comin' to the end, you said suthin' that kind o' spoiled it."

It was now time for the friend to be a little disturbed. He found himself in this conversation, as often in the past, maneuvered into the defensive position. Further, he had a genuine respect for any comment Caleb might make upon religious truth, for he knew him as an earnest, thoughtful Christian. So he inquired at once, what it was he said that spoiled the sermon

which he had preached in the schoolhouse.

"You said," he replied, "that a man al'ays got out o' life jest 'bout what he put into it—or suthin' like that. Am I repeatin' you right?"

"Yes," admitted the friend, "you have quoted my thought correctly."

In fact, the thought as repeated with substantial accuracy was a favorite one with him. More than one college commencement address had been built around it. In the pulpit of his city church he had often expressed it with a sense of satisfaction, as though for the moment he was striking twelve.

"Well," said Caleb, with a slight intimation of challenge in his voice, "'tain't so."

"But," said the friend, "doesn't a man have to work for what he receives?

And doesn't a man succeed according to the kind of work he does?"

"I wa'n't sayin' nuthin' 'gainst work," was the reply. "Putty slim board for a man that won't work. And like 'nough a man's got to use jedgment when he works. Reckon if I put oars in water 'stead lobster pots, won't get lobsters. If I go off Battegat fishin' for cod, an' put a stone on my line 'stead of bait, there won't be no fish."

The thought in the back of Caleb's mind began to dawn upon his friend, but not being ready to yield, he remarked:

"If a man must work, and the way he works decides what he receives, then there was some force to the statement in the closing part of my sermon last summer."

"Yes," was the rejoinder, "but that

ain't all. There's considerbul more 'an a man in the work. Look at that farm in the picter. See the big heaps o' grain; look at the carts loaded; see the farmer sittin' on his horse. Did he and his men do all this? Did he put the ground there, an' send the rain, an' make the wind blow, an' the sun shine? I reckon not. The farmer sittin' on his horse there knows this. He's feelin' kind o' good, an' so he's lettin' the women folks have a chance."

The friend recalled the original of "The Gleaners"—and how Millet had succeeded in placing upon the canvas the soft mellow light of an autumn day. As he listened to Caleb, he detected in his voice the same quality which the artist through color had given to the picture.

"I feel the same way," he continued,

"as that man sittin' on his horse. Do you see the water off shore?" as he pointed out of the window. "I didn't put it there. Down in that water there be lobsters, not 's many as I'd like, but I didn't put 'em there. Out there sometimes I feel kind o' small when I think how much I'd nuthin' to do with. When I've a run o' luck I come 'shore feelin' putty good to everybody an' everything."

It was time for the friend to recognize the truth which he was trying to express. In fact, the appeal was irresistible, for in the fisherman's voice was a quality as delicious as the sunlight softened in the purple haze of an October day. So he said: "You are right, Caleb. There is nothing in that picture about waste; it is all about charity. And if I preach in the schoolhouse some Sunday next sum-

mer, I will take as my text the words, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.'"

There was still the third photograph on the wall, that of "The Angelus." This, of course, is the most famous of the three, perhaps an illustration of another Frenchman's saying, "That man is incurably religious," for the dominant impression is spiritual. In the picture is more distance than in the others: a field, with a wheelbarrow, a three-pronged fork, basket partly filled; and over all the glory of the sunset, as two humble peasants, in their wooden shoes, bow in the attitude of prayer, while the bell rings in the far-away steeple of the church.

Looking at the picture for a moment, and wondering what was in Caleb's mind, the friend spoke and said: "It seems strange that the artist should have painted a field, with the farmer

and his wife in their working clothes, and pausing in the midst of work. If he wanted to express the thought of worship, he should have painted them in their Sunday clothes, walking along the quiet roadway, with the white church building on the village green in the near distance."

"Mebbe," replied Caleb; "hadn't thought 'bout that. We've got no church buildin' here. Nuthin' but schoolhouse, with picters of George Washington and Abe Lincoln on the wall, an' little seats, well 'nough for children, but ruther uncomf'table for grown ups." Then, realizing that he was approaching the region of fault-finding, which for him was a forbidden land, he continued: "I get lot o' comfort goin' over there to church."

The friend noticed that although the fisherman said that they had no church

building, only a schoolhouse, yet he also spoke of going to church. And this was true. The schoolhouse was not a church building, but within the schoolhouse a real church existed. Each Sunday morning in the summer the bell rang and the people gathered. Most of the customary appointments of a church building were lacking. The teacher's desk served for a pulpit; the little fixed seats, into which adults worked themselves after half doubling up like jackknives, took the place of pews; a reed organ, rather creaky, was scarcely an adequate substitute for a three or four-manual pipe organ; figures of saints, apostles, and martyrs, seen in the soft coloring of windows, were absent, and in their stead only ordinary sash windows, with plenty of sunlight and air; yet it was a church of the living God.

So the friend remarked: "Caleb, I am glad that the schoolhouse is a church for you. In New York, where I live, there are many very costly church buildings, with lots of things that money can buy. But the real thing in divine worship, which cannot be bought with money, is found in the gatherings in the schoolhouse, as well as in the famous city churches. Often during the year I find myself in the city thinking of the service here and forgetting about the blackboards, teacher's desk, and little seats. I feel that it is a great privilege for us all to come together once a week for worship."

This pleased the honest fisherman, and the soul within him seemed to shine out in his weather-beaten face. Then, taking up the thought where the other had left it, he said: "Things

seem better 'round here when there's preachin' every Sunday. Gets lonesome when the summer 's gone an' the Methodist elder comes down only once a month from North Westport. But," he added, "you can worship God in other places than the schoolhouse, jest's 'em in the picter."

It was evident that the fact in the picture which impressed him was that the man and woman who were in the attitude of worship were not in church but in the midst of their work. He hesitated for a moment, and the friend remained silent, knowing that with the analogy of nature as wet and dry he was thinking of himself and his own work. Then, looking at the picture, yet seeing more than the picture, he said in a voice subdued, and modest: "I've bin out off the south shore in the early mornin' at work pullin' my

pots. 'Fore I've known what I was doin' hev stopped work an' watched the sun come up over Fishers Island. Mebbe it was sort o' shiftless to stop workin', but suthin' gets hold o' a man when he sees 'em colors in the sky an' on the water."

"No, Caleb," replied the friend, "I don't think it was shiftless in you to stop work in the presence of the sunrise. The artist doesn't think so either, for he has the farmer and his wife stop digging potatoes for a time. I think when you do that in the early morning you are simply holding church for a moment in your dory. You know the first conception that man had of a temple or a church, was not something made of wood and stone, but nature itself. The sky was the roof, the encircling horizon the walls, the sounds of the wind and waves the

music, and the colors on sea and land the decorations. So man said, as in the Bible, 'And in his temple everything saith, Glory.'"

Caleb knew the meaning of this truth better than his friend, who lived most of the year in the cramped and crowded city, so he added, as if by way of emphasis: "More 'n once, I've bin out on Sheeps Bay, an' seen the sun drop down behind the pine tops on Greytown. Hain't got words to tell it, but the sky looked like I think heaven's like."

"Well, Caleb, you needn't feel worried because you have not the words to express all that you experience. There are some experiences in life that lie beyond exact expression. You can measure the distance across Sheeps Bay and the height of the pine trees on Greytown, but you can-

not measure exactly the sheen on the water and the glow above the trees in the sunset hour. Feeling in life is often deeper than thinking."

He didn't seem to hear this, for the speech had passed from the region of conversation, with its interchange of thought, to that bordering on soliloquy. After a pause he said in a voice not only subdued but gentle: "Up the North Road, if you'll stop 'gainst the fence by the graveyard, you'll see in the corner near you this way a stone marked, 'Nellie Matthews.' That's my little girl that died twenty years ago this comin' December. It was a wild, blowy night, an' it's strange, but when I see some o' 'em sunsets over Greytown, they make me think o' my little girl, an' then I want to row hard."

There was no suggestion of weak-

ness as he said this. His voice had that peculiar blend rarely found, of being at once gentle and manly. But having said this, a change came in his voice as he continued: "'Bout that bell in the steeple; the man I bought the picter of says it's called 'Angelus,' and means 'angels.' Well, there ain't no steeple 'round here. But I've bin off Toms Island when there wa'n't no wind, an' the water was smooth with clouds pictered in it. An' then the bell in the buoy seemed to make a music dif'rent from earthly sounds. Mebbe it was me that thought it—I dunno—but that's how I felt, anyhow. Yes, Elder, if a man's heart's right, he'll find God. An' when I saw that picter over in Portland I jest thought o' my feelin's on the water."

As he ceased speaking there was a silence broken only by the ticking of

the wooden-framed clock behind the stove. Then the friend thought of a verse of poetry written when Millet's "The Angelus" was in this country, and repeated:

"Not of this earth
Had ye your birth;
Others are ye
Of nobler worth.
Spirits, not clay;
Not beasts of burden,
Souls that pray."

The two returned to their chairs by the windows. The friend was about to say a word before going, when Caleb, pointing at the book on the mantel, said: "Elder, will you read a verse or two?"

Reaching up to the shelf, the friend got the Bible, and, returning to his seat, opened it at random, and thought for a moment as to an appropriate selection. As he sat there with the

Bible open before him, his eye wandered to the wall, and resting upon the picture of "The Sowers," he repeated the words of Christ: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." He then glanced at "The Gleaners," and with Caleb's interpretation in mind he found himself repeating that beautiful chapter of the apostle, beginning with the words: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity." As he looked at "The Angelus," the words of the Psalmist came into his mind:

"If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of
the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me."

Then he knelt in prayer, and with a

deep sense of gratitude, thanked the heavenly Father for friendship; asked him to keep them both steady in the work he has for them to do; to fill their hearts with charity as they meditate upon what he does for them rather than upon what little they can do for themselves; and to give them richly of his Spirit, that, whether upon sea or land, they might be confident of his presence.

As he closed, Caleb joined in the Lord's Prayer. The friend will never forget the voice of the simple-hearted fisherman—a voice that had in it the music of the sea; not the strong, tumultuous music of the storm, but the soft, gentle music, when the "winds are up gathered like sleeping flowers," and the waves slip up and slide down on the rocks.

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